

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE

Attached is an initial report drafted by the Center's research team on the role of CIA intelligence support for the conduct of foreign and national security policy. It does not attempt to reach firm conclusions, but rather seeks to state the basic issues and questions in a meaningful way and then to establish an appropriate framework for further exploration.

The thoughts recorded here stem from a careful reading of the pertinent intelligence literature and from discussions with some 35 Agency officers who are in frequent contact with policy makers and their staffs. The team has, as yet, undertaken no systematic interviewing of policy people, though it is aware of certain of the comments made in the recent past by ranking officials on the policy side. How best to proceed with that phase is still to be decided. In the immediate future, the team will give attention to a number of case studies as another avenue of approach to ascertaining what impact CIA intelligence makes (or should make) on particular policy issues of major importance. It will also complete its interview process with Agency personnel.

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The members of the team: [redacted] and [redacted] will be pleased to have your ideas and comments on this preliminary effort. The mailing address is OTR/II/CSI, Room 926 Chamber of Commerce Building; the telephone number is extension 2337.

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Director, Center for the
Study of Intelligence

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Approved For Release 2000/08/31 : CIA-RDP79-00498A000700050007-2

CIA Intelligence Support for the Conduct of Foreign
and National Security Policy

An Initial Report From the Center for the Study of Intelligence

"There is no phase of the intelligence business which is more important than the proper relationship between intelligence itself and the people who use its product. Oddly enough, this relationship, which one would expect to establish itself automatically, does not do this. It is established as a result of a great deal of persistent conscious effort, and is likely to disappear when the effort is relaxed."

This quote from Sherman Kent's Strategic Intelligence For American World Policy (1949), is but one of a number of perceptive observations contained in the intelligence literature. Yet as helpful as such thoughts are, they do not comprise a coherent doctrine applicable to the actual relationship which has developed over the years between intelligence producers and policy makers. The model that the literature describes is, in fact, starkly oversimplified.

The policy maker, as posited in the literature, assembles information relevant to his problem, weighs policy options and their implications, and proceeds to select a course of action. Intelligence provides the factual and interpretative background and projects the probable impact

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and consequences of alternative strategies. The intelligence producer has a sizeable, yet carefully delineated role, and is admonished to guard against too intimate an involvement in the policy making process lest he compromise his impartiality and objectivity.

If there ever was such an idealized system, it is surely not in evidence today. More sophisticated analysis of policy making describes an intricate system of human and institutional interactions in which traditional conceptualizations of the role intelligence plays are no longer very useful. Intelligence officers have come to attach less importance to the alleged danger of being "too close" to policy making and more importance to the difficult task of contributing effectively by providing high-quality products and services that are timely and relevant to policy makers' concerns.

THE POLICY PEOPLE

A sine qua non for examining the relationship of CIA intelligence to the formulation of foreign and national security policy is an adequate description of the policy audience. There is a tendency to think of policy as being formed largely or entirely by a few at the very top--the Presidents, the Bundys, the Rostows, and the Kissingers. Unquestionably such figures play a key role, especially in crisis situations, but there also is a great corpus of policy

that is made or influenced by others--by the incremental, day-to-day decisions of country desk and embassy officers, by the staff people who write feasibility studies for their principals, by the innovative suggestions of, say, junior NSC or ISA officers, and even by congressional aides.

Some policy decisions rest on deliberations by a very few; others stem from recommendations of a high-level body reviewing the work of a middle-level committee that was derived from a series of options formulated at a lower level on the basis of inputs from the next level down. Policy also is made by muddling through in the middle and even by unchecked momentum at the bottom. Thus, policy makers must be thought of as many and varied. Whether the determination of a policy occurs high, low, or in-between, the set of policy people involved will not be precisely the same for an international economic decision as for a foreign political one, and not the same for a strategic weapons matter as for either a political or an economic issue. Nor, of course, will the set of people considering changes in policy in the Middle East be the same as those involved in working out arrangements concerning Latin America. The opportunities for intelligence input to policy making differ widely from case to case.

It must also be recognized that policy makers--whether considered as individuals or in groupings--are diverse in

interests, concentrations, and working styles. Such differences are usually easy enough to perceive, but intelligence producers laboring to provide day-to-day support are not as actively aware as they might be of the particular problems or opportunities which may be involved. As producers consider ways of improving intelligence-policy relationships, a thorough understanding of the attributes and idiosyncrasies of important policy figures would seem to be essential.

Perhaps better recognized are the sweeping differences in attitude and approach between policy makers, on the one hand, and intelligence producers on the other. The character of policy makers' tasks, the imperatives to which they respond, the range of demands upon their time and energy, their activist inclinations, all these tend to limit intelligence producers' access and impact. It is ascertainable--without interviewing or polling policy people--that they regard themselves as having certain expertise and ample sophistication; that they are accustomed to thinking, interpreting and projecting, as well as to operating, and that many of them have long focused on foreign political affairs. They value intelligence support, but some kinds much more than others. They like hard--or hard looking--facts more than they do complicated formulations or philosophical arguments, and they do not draw the

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same distinction intelligence producers draw between "raw" and "finished" intelligence. Policy makers appreciate receiving from intelligence that which they cannot--or cannot efficiently--provide for themselves. They especially value a unique intelligence input, the important piece of information or analysis that is unobtainable elsewhere.

SOME ARBITRARY CATEGORIES

A first step toward examining how the Agency's intelligence relates to policy making is to categorize and define the support we now provide. On the basis of the team's research so far, we would divide this support into three categories: Broad Spectrum Reporting, Customized Service, and Independent Anticipation. These categories are not rigid and there actually is a great deal of overlap.

Broad Spectrum Reporting, provided in such forms as current intelligence publications and [REDACTED] disseminations, **STATSPEC** keeps a core of top policy officials and a corps of others appraised of worldwide political, economic, military, and other developments. This reporting provides a convenient way for policy people to stay in touch with events outside their own areas of expertise and to make sure they haven't missed anything important within their domains. It can also call attention to just-acquired information, or convey a

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particularly incisive analytical or interpretive insight useful even to an area expert.

Customized Service is more specialized, and to a somewhat greater extent is keyed to specific consumer concerns. It may be supplied in response to specific requests by policy people, special needs ferreted out by NIOs and others in frequent contact with consumers, or unstated concerns that intelligence officers became aware of. Examples include intelligence support to the SALT and MBFR delegations, specially prepared OER memoranda, some NIEs, and other analytical papers and products produced by various Agency components. Some offices have recently demonstrated their ability to perceive needs and move speedily to fill them. OGCR's support for Middle East peacemaking efforts and the Law of the Sea negotiating team are cases in point. Not all of this kind of service is of optimum usefulness to policy makers, since securing the customers' regular and helpful guidance can be so difficult, especially when they refrain from confiding their own plans and activities. The fact that intelligence producers cannot get the full guidance they would like inhibits their responsiveness. At the same time, it diminishes any danger that intelligence will become engulfed by policy making through an enthusiastic provision of customized service that causes intelligence producers to

overlook or ignore important longer-range issues in their effort to tend to a consumer's immediate concerns.

Independent Anticipation is supposed to help guard against this danger through thought processes aimed at suggesting alternative ways of looking at current problems and identifying and tracking others that policy people either have yet to perceive or lack the time or inclination to cope with.

This function is pursued through a variety of analytical work done in OPR, OSR, OWI, OSI, OCI, OER, etc. as well as in much of the estimative effort carried forward through the NIO system. But much more than the production of papers is required: intelligence officers must try to anticipate discontinuities as well as continuation of trends; analysts must school themselves to think the unthinkable; and managers must be ready to redeploy resources in preparation for future demands.

Intelligence producers who want their efforts to play a meaningful role in policy making must be prepared to deliver information in all three categories via a range of products and services geared to the realities and complexities of the policy makers' world. A diversity of intelligence inputs delivered to varied policy audiences enhances the impact of intelligence by multiplying its channels of entry into the policy making process.

SOME TENTATIVE FINDINGS

Discussions with a cross-section of senior Agency officers, many of whom are in regular contact with policy people, have prompted the research team to record some preliminary observations on the state of CIA support for foreign and national security policy.

--A diverse assortment of Agency products and services is being supplied to a wide variety of policy people. Our channels of entry into the policy making process include some at or near the top, many more below, and a few that are little known within the Agency itself.

--A significant intelligence input is made by word of mouth rather than the printed page. Oral briefings facilitate consumer feedback and producer responsiveness. The personal contacts involved may also serve to help build confidence in the value of the intelligence product. It may be, moreover, that the modus operandi of high-level policy people is such that the only way to insure continuity in their receipt of intelligence is through regular oral briefings.

--The impact of finished intelligence varies significantly with different kinds of

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subject matter. It tends to be greatest in areas where it is generally recognized that manipulation of data and worthwhile analysis require special expertise or methodological skill, as in the military, scientific, and technical fields. This is especially the case where there is some question as to the objectivity of other sources of information or where the Agency has a virtual monopoly in the field, as appears, for all practical purposes, to be the case in international economics. Our political intelligence products, in contrast, tend to be less readily accepted because there is credible competition and because policy people are prone to believe they are at least as well equipped as anyone to make political judgments.

--Many policy people find our top-of-the-line formally published finished intelligence less relevant and useful than other, more mundane products and services. Photos, maps, official texts, figures, and other hard--cr hard-looking--information is especially appreciated because it

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is unique, or not readily obtainable elsewhere, or simply because it is immediately recognizable and understandable without interpretation, explanation, or analysis.

Intelligence producers are in a service industry and are obligated to insure that policy makers are aware of what intelligence is doing and can do in their behalf, but consumers are under no corresponding obligation to use the intelligence they receive. Intelligence almost always will be only one among a number of sources of information available to policy makers, and their decisions may be shaped by personal, bureaucratic, political, or other factors having nothing to do with the intelligence input. There are instances where intelligence directly and perceptibly shapes policy, such as SALT and MBFR, but these are likely to continue to be the rather exceptional cases.

This state of affairs almost certainly will continue in the face of institutional and personnel changes in the policy hierarchy, and intelligence producers will inevitably have to maintain a "persistent conscious effort" to play a meaningful role in the policy making process. We may never attain the degree of impact we would like to have at the highest policy making levels, but there is likely to always be plenty of opportunity for less dramatic success among

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the staff people whose ideas eventually percolate to the top. The incremental impact of intelligence on these policy people tends to be invisible, but the cumulative impact on policy making is considerable.

FOCI FOR FURTHER STUDY

The research team believes that the matters listed below are among those worthy of more, in-depth consideration:

- Whether intelligence producers can profit from a better understanding of the dynamics of policy making and, if so, what should be the nature of the learning process.
- Whether it is possible to develop a clearer, and more complete, doctrinal exposition of what our intelligence products are designed to accomplish so as to help us evaluate consumer feedback more realistically.
- Whether we can expand our channels of entry into the policy making process so as to increase the amount and relevance of intelligence support provided.
- Whether we can improve coordination (and thus enhance effectiveness) of our whole range of contacts and relationships with policy makers.

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- Whether we can develop fuller confidence on the part of policy makers in the quality and utility of our products.
- Whether, and in what particular spheres, a deficient knowledge of our country's own plans and actions, prevents our provision of useful intelligence support.
- Whether we can insure that in our eagerness to improve our broad spectrum reporting and provide better customized service we do not neglect the equally important need for more and better independent anticipation.
- Whether by attempting to fulfill consumers' needs we risk moving too far into areas that could, and perhaps should, be served by other governmental organizations.
- Whether the policy audience requiring intelligence support will grow markedly as the legislative branch of our government increasingly asserts its prerogatives in foreign affairs. (The overall Congressional aspect of intelligence support is probably worth an independent study).

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--Whether there is a need for a more systematic approach to the provision of intelligence via oral briefings.

The research team will proceed to explore these and other areas. We thank the many Agency officers who have already assisted us in the study and invite questions and comments.